

VACATING 5 MINUTE SPECIAL ORDER SPEECH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas). Without objection, the 5 minute Special Order of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. McCOTTER) is vacated.

There was no objection.

LET IT BLEED: RESTORING THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. McCOTTER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. McCOTTER. Madam Speaker, as my Republican Party completes its first year in the minority since 1994, we find ourselves held in historically low regard by the sovereign American people.

To end this trend, Republicans must accurately assess our party's past and present failings; and its future prospects of again providing Americans a meaningful choice between the major parties. This remain, after all, a party's duty to the citizenry.

For my GOP to fulfill it, first we must bury our ideological dead. Safely on this side of the cleansing mists of memory, it is chic to eulogize the late Republican majority. From the chattering class few insights emerge, for in the aftermath, only poetry is an apt epitaph.

"The world is too much with us; late and soon; getting and spending we lay waste our powers; little we see in nature that is ours. We have given our hearts away. A sordid boon."

Such was the Republican bathos: A transformational majority sinned and slipped into a transactional "cashocracy." Promises, policies, principles, all bartered, even honor. The majority now is of the ages. May it rest in peace. And be redeemed.

Once, George Santayana cautioned: "Those who do not learn the lessons of history are condemned to repeat them." If our current Republican minority guilefully refutes or gutlessly refuses to admit, accept and atone for the bitter fruits of its lapsed majority, it will continue to decline in the eyes of the American electorate. Thus, for the sake of our Nation in this time of transformation, we must fully and frankly examine and understand the cardinal causes of the Republican majority's recent demise, and, sadder but wiser, commence our Republican minority's restoration as a transformation political movement serving the sovereign citizens of our free republic.

To begin, we must retrace our steps down a broken alley of broken hopes to glean the essence of our party's headier times, big hits and faded cookies.

Though many of its legislative leaders may moot the point, two Presidents caused the 1994 Republican revolution: Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton.

The members of 1995's new Republican majority were Ronald Reagan's political children. From President Reagan, Republican congressional revolutionaries inherited a philosophy of politics as the art of the possible: Co-gently expressed by conservative intellectuals ranging from Edmund Burke to Russell Kirk, this philosophy's central tenet held:

Men and women are transcendent children of God endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights.

Government was instituted to defend citizens' inalienable rights and facilitate citizens' pursuit of the good and of true happiness.

Over the generations, Divine Providence has established and revealed through tradition prescriptive rights and custom within communities how order, justice, and freedom, each essential, coequal and mutually reinforcing, are best arranged and nurtured for humanity to pursue the good and true happiness.

Finally, human happiness is endangered by every political ideology, for each is premised upon abstract ideas; each claims a superior insight into human nature not revealed through historical experience; each proffers a secular utopia unobtainable by an imperfect humanity; and, each demands an omnipotent, centralized government to forcefully impose its vision upon an "unenlightened" and unwilling population.

This is the political philosophy and resulting public policies a once-impo- verished youth from Dixon, Illinois, Ronald Reagan, engagingly articulated to America throughout his Presidency in the 1980s. By 1994, the American people who have taken Ronald Reagan at Russell Kirk's word that "conservatism is the negation of ideology," and remembering its beneficent impact upon their daily lives, yearned for its return. For self-described congressional Republican revolutionaries, this formed fertile electoral ground, one shaped as well, it must be admitted, by a host of unheralded and immensely talented GOP redistricting attorneys. But like all revolutions, the peace required a villain.

Enter Bill Clinton.

Exuberant at having defeated an incumbent President George H.W. Bush, Clinton mistook a mandate against his predecessor as a mandate for his own craftily concealed liberalism. In his first 2 years in the Oval Office, this mistake led Clinton to overreach on "kitchen table" issues, such as raising taxes and socializing medicine.

Daily, the four-decade old Democratic congressional majority abetted Clinton's radical policies, and across the political spectrum, voters seethed.

Congressional Republicans bided their time, planned their revolution and seized their moment. Led by their spellbinding and abrasive guru from Georgia, congressional Republicans unveiled their "Contract With America" to much popular, if not pundit, acclaim.

Though much mythologized, if it is to prove instructive for the present Republican minority, this contract can and must be placed in its proper perspective. A musical analogy is most elucidating.

When a reporter once praised the Beatles for producing rock's first concept album, Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band, John Lennon curtly corrected him: "It was a concept album because we said it was." Lennon's point was this: Yes, the Beatles had originally set out to produce a concept album, but early in their sessions the band dropped any conceits to creating a "concept album" and recorded whatever songs were on hand. Recognizing their failure, the Beatles tacked on a final song, Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band (Reprise), to engender the illusion they had, after all, created a concept album. Importantly, when the band later tried to produce a true "concept album" and accompanying film, Magical Mystery Tour, the lackluster result was one of the Beatles' few failed artistic ventures.

Similarly, congressional Republicans' "Contract with America" was a collection of specific policy proposals and concrete grievances against the incumbent Democratic President and his legislative allies. It possessed merely an implicit philosophy, one obviously harkening back to Reagan. Even less than Sergeant Pepper, the individual tracks of which have mostly stood the test of time, today many of the Contract's specific proposals sound dated. But like Sergeant Pepper, what endures about the contract is the fact that it was marketed as a revolutionary concept in governance. Of course, it is not. The contract was a suitable period piece which served its purpose—the election of congressional Republicans in sufficient numbers to attain our party's first majority in 40 years. Nevertheless the contract's lack of a clearly enunciated political philosophy sowed the seeds of the subsequent Republican devolution.

Therefore, if the current Republican minority buys into the myth and makes the contract the basis of a derivative "concept" agenda, the GOP will be condemned to another 40-year Magical Mystery Tour through the political wilderness.

This is not to say the members of 1995's new Republican majority lacked a political philosophy or immutable principles. Quite the contrary: These Members were steeped in the Reagan tradition. But after an initial rush of laudable accomplishments, the Members found themselves trapped by the contract's inherent pragmatism and particularity. Absent a philosophical anchor in the contract, Members drifted into the grind of governance, which distorted Reagan's philosophical principles for public policy into nonbinding